

K Theophilus 1745

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Considerations ON A PAMPHLET ENTITUL'D,

The Duty of Consulting
A
*Spiritual GUIDE,
CONSIDERED.*

Given and Handed about to the Inhabitants of Martock, Long-Sutton &c.

And
The Author's Popish Arguments
Refuted and Detected.

*Creditis avectos hostes? aut ulla putatis
Dona carere dolis. Virgil Æneid.*

2.
Think ye that Romish Priests do'nt still accost
With seeming Gifts? to gain what they have lost.

Printed in the Year 1724.



The DEDICATION.

To the Parsons and Inhabitants of
Martock, Long-Sutton, Kingsbury &c.

Gentlemen and Neighbours,

POOMP and LUXURY have ever been fatal Enemies to true Religion, but more especially the Christian. When the Jews were in their most flourishing State of worldly Grandeur, then the very Sinews of Religion shrunk among them, as is evident from the latter part of the Reign of King *Solomon* and divers other places mentioned in holy Writ.

The Lamentable Annoyances, which happened to the Christian Religion (in the Reign of *Constantine* the first Christian Emperor) but in its infancy, by the alluring Enticemens of worldly honour and preferments, were certainly the Forerunners of the dark Apostacy. The Ministers of the Gospel, which had been persecuted from place to place having now receis and ease became Court Parasites: they which had been Subjects of the Kingdom (and Servants of the Church) of Christ, became Subjects of another Kingdom, departing from the Purity of the Gospel both in Life and Doctrine. They which had dealt in plainness and Integrity without respect of Persons

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sons became flatterers of their Superiors, and Lorders over their Inferiors, enslaving the former by their fawning Speeches, and the latter partly by force, and partly by terror; 'till at last they became (in a manner) Masters, not only of the Secrets but also of the Power of Princes; which indeed they converted to very bad ends.

By this time the greater part had lost all their Religion, and indeed most of their Morality, and fearing (doubtless) the people would take umbrage at it, they formed to themselves certain Schemes of Hierarchical Government, which they got pass'd into Establishments: and then these Prelatical Princes play'd the Devil upon two Sticks. They pretended to preach the doctrine of a Self denying Jesus, and at the same time clench'd the nail to feed their own Bellies instead of the flock of God, and to engross to themselves riches and Grandeur instead of reprehending pride & luxury. ---- And now these Reverend Corporencies having secur'd to themselves Farce, and Tythes and what not; begun to be ungovernable and unsatisfiable. Not content with a part they exert themselves with all their power & policy to acquire the whole. And as a reward for their foolish Bigotry they

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they excommunicate, dethrone, give bodies to Russians, and the Souls to the Devil of their quondam Stil'd worthy Patrons. They have long since left off to walk in Sindals from Town to Town and from City to City, they sit at home, eat, drink and are merry; and to keep the Populace in aw, they have their Journey-men and Sub-journey-men, which they teach them (as the first principles of Religion) to obey, reverence & adore, as is manifest from the Popish Clergy and our Author's Pamphlet. And to blind the people in Ignorance and to keep them from a true Reformation they have certain political inventions, which to make the more awful, they tell them they (the Priests) are the true Successors of the Apostles, from whom they have all along received these ceremonial Impositions mediately. Hard to believe! and 'tis hoped, how true or how false a part of them are, the following Treatise will make appear. Among the many of the sordid Inventions they have set up as the doctrine of the Gospel, there are two fatal ones, Confession and Absolution; the one to trepan People with, that afterwards the fear of a discovery is a Buggbear on the one hand, and with their Bigots the fear of a denial of an

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an Absolution, an Hobgoblin on the other hand; so that with these being chain'd up they cannot easily oppose their superstitious doctrines and pernicious designs. I need not tell you, Reverend Gentlemen, (whose Office as well as your Selves this malignant Writer hath so impos'd upon) and Courteous Neighbours (whose Consciences and Religious liberties are so violently attack'd) that if you confess your Sins to God; He is merciful and gracious to forgive you your Sins, if you are truly penitent tho' this Priest never assent to it. And if Christ Jesus set you free then are you free indeed. I say, if you have true faith in him and an Assurance of this freedom upon your Consciences, all the Popes, Prelates, Priests and Curates in the World can never bring you into Bondage, No, nor will all their pretended Power be able to retain your Sins or hinder you of a free passage to Heaven.

This Parson like some of his Predecessors aspiring to Government, takes three Greek words out of *Heb. XIII. 17.* (after he has cited the English Text) which are Πατέρες ἵμεροις υπείκεν Page 15, which I suppose he thinks make much for his purpose. But for my part I think the English Tran-

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Translation seems most likely for his turn. The word ἵγεμένοις says he, is the same that is apply'd to Christ our King, quoting Matt. II. 6. εν τῷ γὰρ ἐξαστοῖ τῆγεμοῦ οὐαὶ ποιησεῖ τὸν λαὸν μου, (the common Translation has it) *For out of thee shall come a Governour that shall rule my People.* But the Word ἵγεμος might as well have been translated a Shepherd, as a Governour; for it properly signifies a Leader, from ἄγω *duco* to lead and παῖδαις *pasco* to feed, from πάπιον *pastor* a Shepherd, from the Original πάσω *pasco* to feed, and tho' its granted, this is apply'd to Christ our King to whom all power is given, yet the Text here rightly translated, *Out of thee shall come a Leader (or Guide) that shall feed my People;* is not speaking of his Government as King, but of his leading out his People and feeding them as a Shepherd, cohering with what David says Ps. XXIII. 1. *My Shepherd is the living Lord. V. 2. He maketh me to lie down in green Pastures; he leadeth me by the still Waters.*

These are words (says he) the most expressive of Obedience and Submission. But, by his leave, they are milder terms than he would make us believe they are. For πειθόμεν *persuader,* *obedio,* *credo,*

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to be perswaded, to obey, to believe may as well, be translated the last (to believe) as being most agreeable to the nature of the Gospel, which uses no force or Violence, &c *υτοικω obsecundo* to strike in with Counsel or Advice; and what does all this relate to the Parson, that the Apostle *Paul* writing to the *Hebrews*, and knowing them to have good Guides and Patterns, advises them to believe them and strike in with their counsel, or if he insist to obey and submit themselves to these Guides, it will not follow that we are under this obligation to him, who, I doubt, is not so approved.

To conclude, Neighbours, I think the whole bent and aim of this Man's writing is to make you (if possible) his Bigots and Asses, to load you with the Intolerable bur-den of Priestcraft, and not to render you the more Christian, and more Orthodox. That you may see the Hook under the bait, is the desire of your Well-wisher.

To You Gentlemen (of the Clergy) I'll only add, that if an Answer, had not been expected from some of Your Own Order (apprehending you were, or ought to have been concern'd in obviating the Errors or Mistakes of the said Author) this might have appear'd to the Publick the sooner.

CONSIDERATIONS

Liberum est ei agere vi id O sicut habet m
in dicitur quod non debet esse nisi



Considerations on a Pamphlet ENTITUL'D,

The Duty of Consulting A Spiritual GUIDE, Considered &c.

THE Pamphlet now before me, is divided into Six Parts (*viz:*) a Dedication, an Introduction, and Four other Chapters. The Dedication is to the Parish of -----, why the Author conceals its name is best known to himself: but finding it is diligently handed amongst the Neighbourhood of Martock, Kingsbury, Long Sutton, and parts adjacent, in Somersetshire, I thought proper

to find these Observations to the aforesaid places for them to peruse and Consider.

In these Observations I propose to go Regularly on, & take notice of each Chapter as in Course I come to them, so that I necessarily fall now on the Dedication, wherein I find the Author expresses a great concern for the Salvation of Souls, and that many who are in the Doctrine and Fellowship of the Church, should be so ignorant of the first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, and so far from the Practice of it ---, and is Ready and desirous to Contribute his best endeavours to Propagate Christian Knowledge, and Restore Christian Practice.

And in his Introduction, lays it down as a necessary Expedient of holy Living, to consult a Spiritual Guide, (or in other Words, the Ministers of Christ) and undertakes to prove the Obligation Christians are under to consider their Pastors under this Character, and to prove who is a true Pastor, which I take to be the substance of these two parts. And had it been as Effectually done as promis'd, I should not have troubled You (Gentlemen) with those Observations, nor my self with penning it.

I am too great a friend to Knowledge, than
to obstruct so useful a Branch of it, and a
Concern for the Salvation of Souls, I esteem
Laudable and Worthy a Christian Pastor.

But when I perus'd the Book, and found
the Author, bringing Mutual intercourse,
to Auricular Confession, and Absolution,
as the consequence, and to prove the true
Pastor, by an uninterrupted Succession, from
the Apostles, by Episcopal Ordination, and
there confine it, and from thence assume,
the title of true and Sole Pastors of the
Church, and require an Acknowledgment,
Obedience, and *Submission*, to them only as
their Guides. I consider'd the Consequence
of such (and the like) Doctrines, how much
they tend to increase *Ignorance* instead of
Knowledge, and *Bigotry* instead of *Chris-
tian Liberty*. Of which we have suffi-
ciently seen the fatal Consequences in some
Neighbouring Nations.

From which consideration I was induc'd
to examine the truth of the Author's Doc-
trines, and strength of his Arguments,
which is the Business of the the following
Sheets, and which You, Gentlemen, are to
judge of.

The First Chapter
Considered.

HE begins Syllogistically thus " If it
 " be the duty of the Pastor pri-
 " vately to instruct ----- it must be e-
 " qually their duty to hearken to, and be
 " directed by his private instructions ---
 " even as its being his duty to preach the
 " word , makes it necessary for them to
 " hear &c," Thus he goes on to the fifth
 Page, by all which I see plainly that 2 and
 3 make 5, paraphrasing after the same man-
 ner, to Page 8, assuming in the consequence
 of his discourse to the Parson of every Pa-
 rish, the title of Spiritual Guide, *Light to*
them that are in Darkness, &c. but how
 truly I must leave his Readers to Judge; for
 I am not satisfied with his Say so; because
 so many of this Order seem more ignorant
 than the rest of their Neighbours, in mat-
 ters Spiritual, for all their Learning. He
 makes a comparison thus, Page 8, " Was
 " there a Physician, and Lawyer autho-
 " rized and appointed in every Parish,
 " whose duty and Office it should be, to
 " give their Advice & Opinion gratis &c"
 Now pray consider the force and parity of
 this

this learned comparison, where must it lie? in the appointment of the first freely to advise in the Case of their Health or Estates; without expectation of reward from the People so advised ? this is much contrary to the Parson's practice for the most part ; For it is very remarkable if the Parson will preach a funeral Sermon for any one of his own Parish without the Sight of an Angel: Such mercenaries use not to open their Mouths for nothing, they are not wont to be so free. He adds Page 9; " The advice of the Lawyer and the Physician may not be asked, or when asked, may not be followed, without Sin; whereas, Christians can neither neglect asking or following the Advice of the Spiritual guide (meaning the Parson) without Sin and danger." Now, if he could once make us believe, that the Parsons are such rare Creatures, that without their Assistance we can never escape Hell, nor reach Heaven, I say, if we could once be brought to this Opinion, we should be pretty Asses indeed. But as Salvation comes not by the Parson we will (by God's help) look for it elsewhere, and consult the Apostle on this great and important affair; who tells us ;

By
Tobias

*By Grace we are saved, thro' faith, and
that not of our selves, it is the gift of God:
This we conclude with an old Poet;*

*He that takes heed
What God doth teach,
Need not take care
What Priest doth preach.*

Page 10 he quotes sundry Texts to prove the deference paid to the Disciples, and Apostles of Christ, and adds thus; " Since it is the self same spirit that make the succeeding Ministers, Overseers of the Flock &c," he had forgot his passage in Page 42, for there he sends us elsewhere, to receive the power, and authority of Apostleship, it seems the Spirit has nothing to do with it; and all the preachers to the Spirit in this matter (without Miracles) are impostors; but more of this in its place. he goes on to make the present Clergy of equal Authority, virtue, and eminence in Service to the Sons of men, as the Apostles and Disciples of our Saviour. And, when they by their good deeds, and holy living, confirm it, we may look on them as such; but 'till then we will suspend our Judgment, concluding from good grounds, that too great a part of the present Clergy have neither

neither part nor lot in this matter. (tho' there are both good and pious men among them) being in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity; having purchased what knowledge they have of these Affairs only with their money at a dear rate. Nay, some of them have been at *Oxford*, or *Cambridge*, to purchase the mystery of Preaching, and come away without it; tho' they paid their money for it, and good reason why, because they could not learn it, thus is their Trade all of a Piece. They bought and paid for what they had not, and they sell and receive money for what they have not to deliver, *viz.*; the Gospel, I must confess, I have not seen a piece of so plain Popery and Popish Doctrine for a long time, and what makes it the more wonderful to me; is because I presume the Author a Protestant Divine of the Church of *England* as by Law established. The authorities intended to be proved by the Greek in Page 15 are noted in the Dedication, and that matter explain'd. I proceed to Page 16. Thus, " Yet still farther in the last place " let these words of Saint *James* be seriously consider'd, (in the margin) of " private confession, Confess your faults

" one to another. Jaines 5, 16." Now if this Text must decide it, with all my Heart, let's go no farther; but leave both Dr. Mills and Hammond, and cleave unto the Text: ---- *Confess your Faults one to another* is the Text: the Context V. 14, 15. *Is any Sick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church and let them pray over him and the prayer of faith shall save the Sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed Sins they shall be forgiven him.* Here is not a word, (thus far) of confession as necessary to an absolution; but the forgiveness is here attributed to the prayer of faith; but then it follows V. 16 *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that you may be healed.* And for my part, if Mr. Parson will first begin to confess his Sins, to his Hearers, in order that we may pray for him, that he may be Healed; then we may with more ease be brought into the same practice. [mark] After the Parson is merrans. But what need of this? his hearers know more of his Sins than he is willing they should. After his long quotation from the learned Dr. he adds Page 18
" Supposing this interpretation was not according

" according to the mind of the Apostle,
 " yet here is a plain command to confess
 " our Sins not only unto God, but unto
 " man also; and if it be our duty to con-
 " fess our faults to our Brethren, it will
 " not surely be denied, that it is at least
 " equally needful and convenient, to con-
 " fess our faults to those Spiritual guides,
 " (meaning the Parsons") Here are in this
 quotation, Three things to be considered.

First, He supposeth false that we are, commanded to confess our Sins to Man, the Text will not bear it, unless it be first made appear, that the faults here spoken of are Sins immediately against God, and not rather personal offences, which seems the most likely.

Second, He beggs the Question to suppose it equally needful to confess our faults to the Parson; unless by such faults we have given him the most offence.

Third, The Command is, *Confess your faults one to another*, i, e, if I have offended you, I ought to confess my faults to you, that you may forgive me, and if you offend me, you ought in like manner to confess to me, and upon it, I ought to forgive, and be reconciled, agreeable with

what our Saviour said on the like occasion, in answer to Peter's Question, *How often shall my Brother offend and I forgive him?* Matt. xviii. 21, 22. After sundry Texts quoted, He thus adds; "The Church of Rome doth indeed ground the necessity of Auricular Confession upon these Texts of Scripture, and accordingly determines, that it is necessary for every Christian to confess his Secret Sins, with their aggravations, unto a Priest, under pain of forfeiting the forgiveness of them." I hope the false determination of the Church of Rome, on the misunderstanding of this Text, or any other, is not a sufficient Warrant for us to dance after them. He adds in the same Page 19 "The Church of England hath not so determined, yet hath she no where expressly condemned this Doctrine," As to what the Church of England hath done in condemning this Doctrine, I will not undertake to determine; But having read the controversy between the Church of Rome (writ by Mr. Harding on the Romish part) and the Church of England writ by Bishop Jewel on the other side, to this I refer my Readers, for the fence of the Church

Church of *England* in this particular, see
Jewels Works Part 1st Page 153. " All
" this great shew of Authorities, Fathers
" and Doctors Mr. *Harding* dischargeth
" easily with one word, for notwithstanding
" all he could best devise to say, his
" Conclusion at last is this. The express
" terms of Secret Auricular confession is
" seldom mentioned in the Antient Fa-
" thers (then adds the Bishop) Seldom he
" saith as if it were sometimes us'd altho'
" but seldom, but if he had left out sel-
" dom, and said never, I know his Tale
" had been the truer. Again Page 159,
" 160. Last of all you grant the terms of
" Auricular and Secret confession are sel-
" dom mentioned in the Antient Fathers,
" (then adds the Bishop) Here wanteth Mr
" *Harding*, some part of your Simplicity,
" if you would have your Reader to be-
" lieve you; you should have alledged cer-
" tain of the antient Fathers (one at least,)
" if you could have found so many, that
" had at any time used the express terms of
" Secret Auricular Confession, otherwise it
" had been the better and plainer way,
" to have confessed expressly, that the said
" express terms are never used in any one

" of all the antient Fathers. Howbeit if
" auricular or secret Confession had then
" been in use, it could never so long have
" lack'd a Naine. (Again Page ibid, he
" quotes St *Augustine* thus;) our Lord
" (says he) hath granted the office of Bap-
" tism unto many, but the Power and Au-
" thority in Baptism to forgive Sins, he
" hath reserved only to himself." Where
is now your power of absolution? If this
be true you have none at all. What a vast
difference there is between this good old
Bishop's Doctrine, and Spirit, in defence
of the Church of *England*, and the re-
formation against *Rome* and her adherents,
and the Author of this Pamphlet? who
seems to labour to bring us back to *Rome* a-
gain, But to return, Page 19 " The Church
" of *England* hath, (says he,) no where
" expressly condemn'd this Doctrine" Let
us hear the said Bishop, Page 12, " But
" Mr. *Harding* here by these words [*pre-*
" *pare* and *dispose*] meaneth privy con-
" fession, which many have used as a Rack
" of men's consciences to the maintaine-
" ance of their tyranny ----, so violent
" the late writers have been in exacting
" things of their own divices," thus far the
Bishop

Bishop, who was the Champion in our cause, and his works approved to that Degree, that they are chain'd in some of our Parish Churches by order of our Superiors, I take his condemning auricular confession, (as its being Spurious, and an invention of Priests to enslave the People, and rack their Consciences for the Maintainance of their Tyranny. I say, I take his condemnation) to be the Church's, until the Church by some publick declaration, shall make it appear to the contrary. But we with St. Bernard as quoted by the Bishop Page 13;

" May pray and complain (against the impious Doctrine of our Author) O Lord wickedness hath proceeded from the elder Judges, thy Vicars, which seem to rule thy People, We cannot say, as the People is, so is the Priest; for the very People are not so wicked as the Priest."

Not any thing more in this, worthy of notice. I proceed to his Second Chapter.

Considerations on the Second Chapter.

HE labours to perswade his Reader to apply to the Parson of the Parish, calling him the Spiritual Guide, and start-

ing

ing his many objections to answer, in order to make it clear. Such objections and such answers are not worth Noting, but for the sake of my Readers; He quotes divers Texts, applying them to the Parson; see his words Page 25. " It may be
" thou art ashamed to acknowledge thy
" faults, or lay open thy case unto thy
" Spiritual Pastor, or afraid that this will
" expose thee too much to him, and lessen
" his opinion of thee: &c." Good reason
why I should be afraid of this piece of
Priestcraft , which is more suitable for
Spain, Portugal, and Italy, than the free
People of *England*, where we are blest with
the Bible in our Mother tongue, and our
People generally by God's Blessing see fur-
ther than this Popish Doctrine, which can
serve to no other end (as saith the Bishop)
" Than to rack our Consciences by the let-
ting in of Priestly Tyranny. But to enforce
this practice he makes this Comparison;
" Art thou ashamed to discover the most
" secret and shameful Diseases? when thou
" askest the advice of thy Physician con-
cerning the Cure of them?" I can see
no parity in this to his Spiritual Guide;
unless he supposes the Parson (as the Phy-
sician

fician) can prescribe (for the Sinner) some means natural to take away the radical Cause of Sinning: And can there be a readier way than to reduce the Layity to Poverty and Slavery? which is what this Doctrine tends to. He adds, " Does any one sue thee at Law, and endeavour to take away thy Right? Dost not thou presently lay open thy Case to some skilful Lawyer? or Dost thou keep any thing back from him, that may in the least concern thee?" Neither is there any parity in this to the Parson for he is not half so serviceable in Spirituals as the Lawyer is in Temporals. If he was as serviceable in the saving of my Soul, as the Lawyer in saving my Estate, I should set a greater value upon him; tho' as it is, I esteem him as much or more than he deserves. He adds, " Why then art not thou equally open and free in discovering the hidden Vices of thy Soul to him? whom thou consults concerning the Salvation of it?" If the Parson with his Divinity could be so efficacious to the saving of my Soul as the Lawyer & Physician are in preserving my Health and Estate, there was some reason for what is here said.

said. Altho' I allow, if any one, either by the preaching of the Word, or conviction of Conscience, should be so prickt to the heart. (under a sence of their Sins) as to cry out; *What shall I do to be saved?* Under this condition, a Spiritual Man may be helpful; and if our Parson be such an one, he may administer good by his counsel; but if he is not, he will add affliction, to the afflicted; for it is not simply an habit, and literature that make a man Spiritual; * *But he that is Born of the Spirit is Spiritual. And such have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,* as said the Apostle, *You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, ----- If the Spirit of God dwell in you, for he that bath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his.* I say, such a Spiritual Man as this, (to a Soul thus prickt to the Heart, and crying out in bitterness, *What shall I do to be saved?*) Can administer help, & by declaring what God hath done for his Soul. This indeed may be of infinitely more moment to such a Person than anything that concerns either Body or Estate: Such a Spiritual Man will advise

* John iii. 6 . Gal. v. 24. Rom. viii. 9, 14.
† Acts 22. to

to confess thy Sins to God (and not to thy Ghostly Father, (the Parson) who is able to forgive and || save thy Soul by his Grace thro' faith in his Son, by whom Salvation comes.

I never yet understood that Cornelius or his Family confessed their Sins to Peter, or that Peter ever desir'd such a Practice from them, and when at Peter's preaching, the Jews were prickt to the heart, crying out, What shall we do &c. Peter did not say you must all confess your Sins to me, and then I will tell you what shall be done, but how can I advise you, unless I know what Sins you have been guilty of? They might very aptly have retorted, indeed Peter, if thou canst not advise us to be good until thou knowest how wicked we have been we shall not trouble thee for time to come; but Peter was so far from this, that when they cryed out &c. he directly told them * to Repent, and be Baptiz'd, without more ado; this (as we find) is the Counsel he gave them in this strait of doubting. He adds Page 26 " The more open and " Ingenious thou art with him, the more

¶ Eph. .ii 8. * Acts .ii 37. D. " he

" he will esteem thy sincerity." I can see no reason for the Parishioner to be more ready in confessing his Sins to the Parson, than the Parson should be to his Parishioner, and if the Parson will begin the example, we may, perhaps, be provoked to follow it, and this will answer the Text, *Confess your Faults one to another* and God is faithful and just &c. Jam. v. 16, It is not Confess your faults to the Parson of the Parish, there was no such Order of Men at that time; but as I have already noted, I am afraid Mr. Parson will not lead the way in confessing his Sins to his hearers, who too often know more --- than he would have them. But it seems without this openness and ingenuity in confession there can be no absolution; so his power to absolve Sin lies in the knowledge of it --- Page 26; "But still thou art afraid he will discover thy faults, or failings unto others." And, I can see no reason why we should not, for this Parson in his Cups might be like enough to divert his company with such foolish Stories: For some such cannot keep the faults of their Brethren Secret; how then shall they those of their Hearers? but to guard against this supposed

Supposed fear, he adviseth Page 27 : "That
 " Yet may'st thou without discovering
 " thy self ask advice as it were for a third
 " Person." I doubt the Parson would not
 be content with such a distant Confession,
 but if he should, it will avail nothing to-
 wards an absolution, as it seems, -- Page
 27 " But still thou mayst urge farther,
 " Why should I confess my Sins unto
 " Man ? " He answers this Objection ;
 " That tho' it may not be necessary, in
 " order to obtain forgiveness of Sins, yet
 " joyned with the other Acts of repentance,
 " it may make it more efficacious for the
 " obtaining of it." And then he unlucki-
 ly brings in that passage, in the Case of
Achan, who did confess at the request of
Joshua; but what forgiveness obtained he
 by so doing ? None ; *He was ston'd to*
Death, and not only he, but his family
 likewise; for the Case of Achan was a Le-
 gal one, and the Severity attending his
 confession was for example to deter others
 from the like evil. And as in this Page,
 he allows, "It may not be safe or prudent
 " to make confession of some Sins to any
 " person in the world --- their nature be-
 ing such may render it &c." He, per-
 haps

haps, minded the Proverb confess and be hang'd : If no Person in the World is to be trusted, the Parson of the Parish is excluded by consequence; I therefore advise my reader to confess his Sins to God, and repent thereof, and he that sees in secret will reward his Soul with both peace and forgiveness. In Page 28, " he makes confession necessary to obtain forgiveness of Sins, and that the righteous man may the better suit his Prayers to thy condition and more effectually send them up to Heaven for thy pardon." I have hitherto thought according to the Scripture, that the Spirit of God is sufficient to enable us to pray effectually; and supply us with matter both pertinent and agreeable; but the Parson by this argument has no dependance on it to assist him in suiting his Prayers with matter agreeable to thy Wants; for he is willing first to know what Evils thou hast committed, that he may act accordingly in his Devotion for thee. He answers an Objection in Page 28, with a comparison, of the Chirurgeon searching the wound. This comparison is agreeable enough as it is apply'd to that word, which is both Sharp and powerful and a decer-

nct

ner of the thoughts and intents of the Heart; But as he applies it to the Parson of the Parish it is weak and ridiculous. Page 29, He objects again, " What occasion of consulting a Spiritual Guide in private, when there is so much publick Preaching? " He answers, " That publick Preaching will not reach the case and serve the necessities of all private Christians, has already been observed &c." It is very observable, that some preaching is so far from serving the necessity of all private Christians, that it will serve none at all, being words without understanding, Darkens Counsel, and involves the hearers in Ignorance, worse than if they had none. How then can such Preachers be able to resolve doubts to an enquiring Christian? for no man can inform another what he understands not himself. And whosoever depends on such Guides, will (indeed) be lost with every wind of Doctrine and at last fall with them into the Ditch. I know not what Text he will have to favour this notion, of private Instruction from private Confession. Unless what our Saviour says Matt. v. 23, 24, may be apply'd this way, now if this Text be thus apply'd.

he may lay his hand on his mouth (as the vulgar term is) and be quiet, for it is very remarkable, if one or other in the Parish be not always offended with him, and too often (with sorrow be it spoken) have a just cause for it. The next objection respects the Objector's Strength, as being whole and having no need of a Physician. The answer is very pertinent for the Parson to make as to his Temporals. viz. " I am rich, and increas'd with Goods "(says he) How should the Parson want when he often hath a tenth part of the People's Labour besides the tenth part of the fruits of the Parish? But as to his spiritual treasure I shall leave his Neighbours to Judge. He makes a long objection Page 32, about being Saved, and pretends to answer the same with the words of another of the like Occupation: The objection and answer being long, I leave to my Readers from Page 32 to 39, with only this remark, that he labours still to make it a part of a Duty, and the greatest part too, to consult our Spiritual Guide, the Parson, as if he had all the knowledge and wisdom and at his mouth we must seek it in private; for publick --- it appears will not suffice. He adds Page 34,

" How

How many of them (his hearers) after
 many years going to Church and hear-
 ing of Sermons have no more under-
 standing in the very Principles of their
 Religion, than they had when they were
 Children. ---- Page 38, What then is
 the reason of it, for my part I can
 give no other than this, that either they
 are grossly ignorant, and little better
 than Beasts in understanding: or meer
 Infidels under the name of Christians.
 I can give him a Truer Reason for the
 Ignorance of his Hearers, than what he
 has here render'd, which is this: Those
 that Preach for Doctrine the Inventions
 of superstitious Men, instead of the prac-
 tical Doctrine of our LORD; amuse the
 People, rather than Edify their Under-
 standings in the Principles of Religion
 and in a short way to remedy this fault is
 to direct his hearers, and perswade them
 to consult the Spiritual Guide mentioned
 Tit. iii. 11. Instead of teaching them so
 much to Idolize himself. But this perhaps
 consis not with his interest; For if they
 once regard this teaching, and take heed to
 follow it, the man of this Craft (if the
 Law did not provide otherwise) might go
 to

to work with their Neighbours, and I doubt not, but they would be more profitable in the Field than they are in the Pulpit; for (if what he says be true) they do no good there. Page 38, " Their hearers are still " grossly ignorant, and little better than " Beasts in understanding." If this be so, it is very lamentable; if not, the Parson mistakes, which I rather hope, believing that many of his hearers know more of Religion and Christianity than he is aware of, altho' he thus reviles them. I proceed to his Third Chapter.

Considerations on the Third Chapter.

HAVING noted several frivolous objections in the last Chapter that were not worth observation, but for the sake of my Readers, the same necessity is likewise in this, which is to mark out his Spiritual Guide; (which as before is the Parson;) but lest you should mistake him by reason of his evil conduct and conversation to be such an one, he in this Chapter is directly pointed at, " And if the Parson be " either grossly ignorant or notoriously " wicked," which too frequently is the case

case then we must seek for a better, but not publickly divide from him, tho' the Apostle says, * *From such withdraw thy self:* And I take this to be dividing. -- He begins thus "And now at last I hope I may suppose thee fully convinced of the great necessity of making use of a Spiritual Guide," I have ever since I knew the Grace of God been convinced of the benefit of taking heed thereto for my Spiritual Guide; but I profess by all that our Author hath said applying it to the Person under this title, I am as far from being convinced that he is so, as ever I was, and I hope in his next, he will make this matter out more plain, for the benefit of his Parishioners. He adds; " Among so many different pretenders to the Ministry how shall I find out, which indeed are the Ministers of Christ." Page 40, Now look about you Presbyterians, Independants, Baptists, and all you who have not your Ordination thro' the Bishop's sides, and yet stick not to say you are as good Ministers, as they that have (and permit me to say, without flattery some of you much better

* *I Thess. iii. 6.*

than our Author) "But now you are try'd,
" and altho' you say you are Ministers you
" are not," he has found you in a lie, tho'
you may have Sheep's Coats on your backs,
in your hearts you are Wolves, pray why
must it be so? because for your subsistence
(or Wages) for the work of the Ministry,
you are contented with what the People
which hear you will freely give, and com-
pel none that are unwilling, nor so much
as expect any from those which hear
you not; Oh! happy had it been for the
Church, if never any other provision had
been made for her Ministers; but what had
risen from the good will of the People. The
most likely way to have their wages qua-
drate with their deserts, and this dependance
on the People's good will would have been
a strong fortress against the intemperate,
and loose lives of the Clergy, who now
some of them, take little care of their Du-
ty, living in Luxury and Pleasure, neglect
their Pastoral care, knowing that the Peo-
ple by law are bound to pay them their
Wages, whether they Work or Play:
Nay some of them having large Incomes,
that can afford it, are so Lazy, that for a
small Sum will put off their People with
an

an illiterate ignorant Curate, to read Prayers and Homilies once a week; thus their drudgery is done at a low rate; while they suck the profit and do nothing for it. No wonder their People are ignorant and little better than Infidels, so they may remain, for their Teachers, if they can have the Fleece, the Flock may Starve. But to return to the Dissenters: You have not the Law to favour you as these have; if you had, how you would then act I cannot determine; but these Lambs [forsooth] do not only fleece their own flocks but others also, If they cannot have it by consent, they will force it from you, and as the Prophet *Hosea* complain'd of the Priests in that time it is even so now with too many of ours, (with sorrow be it spoken,) Page 41 " It is to them only that derive their Authority from him (Christ) thro' the hands of the Apostles &c." I want to know where we must find such a set of men; and in what Society they are; and how and in what manner they convey this Authority, one to another, I hope in his next this will be better made out; but he supposes the thing done to my hands in the following words, " Every one (says he) might of

" himself judge what is right, --- if he
 " would consider the following particulars
 " and the Texts annexed to them," I have
 consulted all the Texts under the letter (a)
 and admire at his weakness, to apply them
 to prove three distinct orders one above a-
 nother, Bishops the highest, which he calls
 a kind of Prelacy, of which more anon,
 Page 42 " That they that pretend to an
 " immediate call --- ought as the Apostles
 " did to prove the truth of their mission
 " by working of Miracles; 'till which time
 " no regard, is due to their pretences. "

Now for the Quakers, I call to you for
 an answer to this mighty Period ; for I
 know no Ministers that pretend to an im-
 mediate Call but yours. And now you are
 call'd to prove the truth of your Mission
 by working of Miracles. I hope I need not
 tell you, that if Miracles be a necessary ad-
 junct to prove your immediate call; it must
 by the same rule of Argument, be as need-
 ful to prove a mediate call, "for (says he)
 " the only regular way of having this ho-
 " nour is the deriving of it mediately thro'
 " the hands of others from Christ him-
 " self." Now *argumentum ad hominem*,
 they that pretend to derive this honour
 mediately

mediately thro' the hands of others from Christ himself --- "ought as the Apostles did to prove the truth of their mission by working of Miracles 'till which time no regard is due to their pretences," He may here object, they have something to show as a Licence, or Diploma from the Bishop, that they are permitted to Preach, and you Quakers have no such thing, what then? if Miracles be necessary to prove your Authority, it must be equally necessary to prove theirs; for I will believe none of his Romish Succession, nor that any of their Bishops has such a power to licence or ordain Ministers from their Predecessors, until by working of Miracles they make it appear to be so, as says the Proverb, what is sauce for the Goose is sauce for the Gander. --- "That therefore in the beginning of the Church there was not a parity but inequality or Prelacy in the Church." If he means by Prelacy a Lordship over one another, as the Bishops have over the inferiour Clergy; he hits the matter to some purpose; for our Saviour has told his Disciples, That the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Lordship over one another, --- but it shall not be so among you

you: By this you may see, our Author is right or wrong, judge you whether. But this is only to pave his way to the pretended proof; that none but Bishops have the power of Ordination in their hands, and to speak ironically he has done it to some purpose. but as this argument seems to be level'd at the Dissenters, to make all their Preachers and Preaching inconsistent with the Gospel and the practice of the Primitive Church; I leave it to them to answer, as most properly their province; only I begg leave to add this Caution, Not to call in that antiquated Argument of Uninterrupted Succession, for this must unavoidably drive them to *Rome* for Orders, and if it be true, as all Protestants agree, that the Church of *Rome* is Antichrist, and the Whore spoken of in the Apocalypse, this must consequently conclude that Church dead to a true Ministry her self, and that she is so, the Persecutions, our first Reformers underwent do sufficiently evince. How then is it possible for that Church to convey to others what she has not her self? And to assert that this Succession came thro' her and without interruption too; (that's the Jest) must be little acquainted with the history

history of the Popes and Antipopes often two at a time, both pretending to the same headship in the same Church, *O Monstrum horrendum!* This Argument is a ridiculous Whim, invented to amuse the Simple and Unlearned; for if this Church as above be dead to Christ, she must be likewise dead to his Ministry; for the Church of Christ is not such a Medly as these Men would make of it; this being the true state of the case, no Ordination by Succession can come thro' that Church; for Example; if a man hold an Estate for Life, if that Estate be not renewed before the Death of him, in whose right it is, he cannot by any Ordination, Appointment or Will give it away; but it must, and will, for all that has been done by the last Possessor, come to the Lord of the Fee. This the Inhabitants of the Parishes of *Long-Sutton, Martock* & parts adjacent know to be true in it self; but what parity in this to our Case; may you ask? Thus it appears, allowing that in time past the Church of *Rome* was a true and living Church, endow'd with a Gospel Ministry, under this happy State, she might, approve of, and appoint, (having a true sense of the Qualifications of them who

who were called, to the Ministry) such to the proper services in the Ministry; having the Authority of Christ in what she did, but when by Apostacy she lost that Life and Ministry, she became Dead to Christ & the Authority of approving & appointing Ministers return'd to him that gave it: From which it is plain the Church of *Rome* hath lost her power and right of Ordination long ago; but then it may be urged, she had not lost this power when our Prelates and Ministers received it from her. Answer, she must have then lost it; and the loss she was in, was the Cause why our first Reformers separated from her. If this be granted, which I think cannot be deny'd, then our first Reformers from *Rome* as Antichrist, could not bring from thence a Power which that Church had not, as Bp. Jewel aptly observes in his Answer to Mr. *Harding*: See his Works Part 6, in his Defence of the Apology for the Church, and Page 634, " For that you tell us so many " fair tales of *Peter's Succession*, we de- " mand of you wherein the Pope succeed- " eth *Peter*? You Answer, he succeedeth " him in his Chair, as if *Peter* had " been sometime install'd in *Rome*, and " had

" had sat solemnly all day with his tri-
 " ple Crown in his Pontificalibus, and in a
 " Chair of Gold , and thus having lost
 " both Religion and Doctrine ye think it
 " sufficient at least, to hold by the Chair
 " as if a Soldier had lost his Sword would
 " play the man with the Scabbard. But
 " so *Caiaphas* succeeded *Aaron*: So wick-
 " ed *Manasses* succeeded *David*, so may
 " Antichrist easily sit in *Peters* Chair.
 " Page 121 Part 2d. Thus Mr *Harding*,
 " you see neither had the Pharisees due
 " succession, and continuance from *Moses*,
 " no more than the Pope hath from St.
 " *Peter*; nor did they universally in all
 " points teach the true meaning of Mo-
 " ses's Law; nor did Christ will the Peo-
 " ple universally and absolutely to obey
 " them, so much this Place maketh for
 " your Succession." With much more ve-
 ry pertinent to the same purpose (to which
 I refer my Readers for Satisfaction) suffi-
 ciently setting aside this uninterrupted suc-
 cession, and besides we have the sence of
 Arch-Bishop *Cranmer*, who own'd Ordi-
 nation to be no more than a Civil Ap-
 pointment to an Ecclesiastical Office, from
 which 'tis plain this Argument of successi-
 on

on can be no more than an Invention of Popish Priests to acquire to themselves * Honour and Riches, rather than to maintain the truth of the Gospel. I therefore request the Dissenting Brethren to leave this Shift of Succession for them that want it. You have no need to go to *Rome* for Orders, I can show you a shorter and a cleaner way; (when time serves) for all Protestants going thither for succession must unavoidably bring themselves in for a part of the *Odium* of being Successors to her Idolatry and Superstitions. Having given this (as I apprehend) seasonable caution, I leave what may be further said, to the dissenting Brethren, suspending my own thoughts for the present. I return to our Author, Page 47, "It appears then that the Curate of thy Parish who derives his Authority by an uninterrupted Succession from the hands of the Apostles where thou livest, is regularly thy proper Spiritual Guide." If once the Laity would implicitly believe them in this, (which is already refuted) the Parsons would be brave fellows: But for my part I believe it not, he that can, let him.
 * **the Clergy.**

him. Page 48, He excuses the lewd and wicked Priests, thus; " That their works are not to be imitated, yet whatsoever they bid thee do, agreeable to the Gospel of Christ, that we are to follow." This is contrary to the Apostle who advises his hearers * to be followers of him as he followed Christ, and suffer me to add, Where any Minister or pretended Minister leaves following of Christ, let us leave following of him, notwithstanding what is said here to the contrary. Page 49 he adds; " They are (I think) more at Liberty, if they are so unhappy as to live in a Parish, in which the Minister either is notoriously wicked, or grossly ignorant &c." I think so too, that they are not only at Liberty but it is their duty from such an one to turn away and withdraw themselves, not partaking with him in any religious performance whatsoever.

* *I Cor. iv. 16, xi. 1. Heb. vi. 12.*

Considerations on the Fourth Chapter.

This contains long Quotations, but that little of his own looks more like a Protestant in some parts than the rest of his work. Here he tells us; " We must try all things, even that which is good before we hold it fast," (which is so far well) " for it is required to give an Account of the reason of the faith that is in thee with meekness and fear, and how canst thou do this, if thou dost not take pains to be rightly informed &c." I pray why can't I take pains to be rightly informed without Consulting the Parson, who often knows as little of the matter, as some of his Neighbours for all his Ordination. He adds, " That thou prove all things before thou hold fast even that which is good; much less therefore shouldest thou hold fast that which is evil, without enquiring and proving whether it be so or no." This is like a Protestant and good Reformation Principles, by which I may, as soon as I find either the Parson or his Doctrine evil, take my leave of both, and bid him farewell: to this I can subscribe with both hands.

What

What Pity these Principles should be blend-ed with such Priestcraft Poultry, as his three first Chapters are stuff'd with.

He now makes a long Quotation for 3 Pages together, from one of the like Occu-pation which contains an Harangue full of nothing but courting the People to admire and adore the Parsons; not forgetting to advise them to liberality that they (the Priests) may more plentifully feed them-selves, and more especially considering the Sacrilegious Practices (as he calls them) of some Gentlemen impropietors (I suppose) and possessors of the Churches lands, to you this must be spoken; I therefore shall leave you to redress this grievance at a proper sea-son. The Quakers likewise may be squint-ed at for their awkwardness in paying the Parsons dues. He adds Page 59, "That thou
 " mayst keep close to thy Guide as long
 " as thou livest, and never change him,
 " if God's providence doth not constrain
 " thee." I hope I and my Readers will keep close to our Spiritual Guide the Grace of God, and word of faith in the heart; which is the spirit of truth, and will guide into all truth when the Parson goes Counter to it, and to this Guide I recommend my Readers,

Readers: Praying that Grace, Mercy, and
Peace from God the Father, and our Lord
Jesus Christ, may rest upon you to your
Dying Day; Then when you are about to
leave the World, the evidence of this Spi-
rit will give you an Assurance of Eternal
Life, that this may be your portion, is the
Desire and Prayer

of Your
Friend and Servant

Theophilus

FINIS.



